

House Health Policy Committee
Testimony in Support of House Bill 5668

Christine Habib

September 23, 2014

Dear Committee Members,

My family's life took a dramatic change after a trip to the mall. My son, Elias, was four years at the time he ingested a cookie containing tree nuts. His entire body was red and covered in hives, he was itching, sneezing, and coughing trying to catch his breathe. Thankfully he did not go into anaphylactic shock on his first exposure but as a parent you can't help but think how this could have gone undetected for four years. Fortunately we were one of the lucky ones, however other people who unknowingly have allergies are not so lucky.

As an involved and aware food allergy parent, often times I hear or read disheartening stories of people that didn't have epinephrine on hand and had anaphylactic shock in a public place. In certain cases, these people didn't know they had a severe allergy condition. In other cases, the person just forgot to carry their epinephrine or just stopped carrying it altogether. Nonetheless, some incidents ended fatally.

Today my son is five and it's a lot more manageable to control the environment and his surroundings. But, this becomes more challenging as he grows to be a forgetful, carefree teenager. As parents, we need a piece of mind that our children will have access to epinephrine at restaurants or any other place where they may come in contact with food.

This year, Michigan passed a law mandating all public schools carry epinephrine pens. While this is a step in the right direction I believe it is important to continue this effort in raising awareness among businesses who serve or work with food.

Many public places are required to carry fire extinguishers, they have safety measures in case of burns, and they ensure that food is safe for human consumption. This bill would also give them the opportunity to protect people who have food allergies. It would be another big step in the right direction for Michigan.